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JUSTIFY GALLOPS 1 ½ MILES WITH BAFFERT ON HAND; COLT COULD BREEZE TUESDAY AT CHURCHILL DOWNS

LOUISVILLE, Ky. (Monday, May 28, 2018) – Hall of Fame trainer **Bob Baffert** arrived in Louisville on Sunday to watch his undefeated Kentucky Derby (Grade I) and Preakness (GI) winner **Justify** gallop 1 ½ miles Monday morning at Churchill Downs as the colt continued his training for the June 9 Belmont Stakes (GI).

“Right now it seems everything is going smoothly,” Baffert said. “I’m very happy with how he’s doing training for the Belmont. I think to win the Triple Crown you have to be a big, strong horse and be able to handle a lot of different situations. This horse is just that. He eats everything in front of him and doesn’t lose any weight. That’s a big thing for a horse to be able to win the Belmont. **War Emblem** lost weight after the Preakness and that didn’t bode well in the Belmont. Justify looks really happy for a horse that’s done a lot in just a few months. It just shows the quality he has.”

Owned by **WinStar Farm, China Horse Club, Head of Plains Partners** and **Starlight Racing**, Justify is possible to breeze Tuesday morning, according to Baffert.

“We could put a little breeze in him (Tuesday), I’m really not sure yet. We’ll just play things day to day,” Baffert said.

Only 12 horses have swept the Triple Crown: **Sir Barton** (1919), **Gallant Fox** (1930), **Omaha** (1935), **War Admiral** (1937), **Whirlaway** (1941), **Count Fleet** (1943), **Assault** (1946), **Citation** (1948), **Secretariat** (1973), **Seattle Slew** (1977), **Affirmed** (1978) and, most recently, the Baffert-trained **American Pharoah** (2015).

“We learned a lot from Pharoah,” Baffert said. “Good horses teach you a lot and we keep that experience with us. I feel pretty good about (Justify). The biggest pressure is making sure we don’t disappoint the fans. I’m more worried about that than winning the Triple Crown. We walked into Belmont with Pharoah and I told (son) **Bode** that we may get some hecklers. He was disappointed when we didn’t have any but we may with this horse since he’s been late to the party.”

Undefeated in five starts, Justify has been based at Churchill Downs since April 30 under the care of Baffert’s longtime assistant trainer **Jimmy Barnes**.

“Justify is a great horse but I have a great team,” Baffert said. “Jimmy and everyone who works with us does a great job. We get put in situations like this all year long. I’m at the stage of my life now that I’m ready for these type of situations. If I had these horses 25 years ago I probably wouldn’t be ready and would second guess myself. It’s just like a coach – have a game plan but tweak it if need be. Everyone on the team knows their role.”

Also stabled in Baffert’s Barn 33 at Churchill Downs is Wood Memorial (GI) third **Restoring Hope**, who is on course to join Justify in the starting gate for the Belmont Stakes.

Owned by **Gary and Mary West**, Restoring Hope could breeze Tuesday, according to Baffert.

Other locally-based Belmont contenders training during the exclusive training window at 7:30 a.m. for horses preparing for the 1 ½-mile test were **Free Drop Billy** who breezed five furlongs in :59.60 for trainer **Dale Romans**, Preakness runner-up **Bravazo** who galloped 1 ½ miles for Hall of Fame trainer **D. Wayne Lukas** and fellow Hall of Fame trainer **Steve Asmussen**’s Preakness third **Tenfold**, who galloped about 1 ½ miles.

The Belmont Stakes field could possibly be comprised of the following 11 horses (with trainer): **Bandua** (Dermot Weld), **Blended Citizen** (Doug O’Neill), Bravazo (Lukas), Free Drop Billy (Romans), **Gronkowski** (Chad Brown), **Hofburg** (Bill Mott), Justify (Baffert), **Noble Indy** (Todd Pletcher), Restoring Hope (Baffert), Tenfold (Asmussen) and **Vino Rosso** (Pletcher).

To watch Justify’s Monday morning gallop: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gwZNvaE3UuE>

For complementary past performances of the Belmont Stakes contenders courtesy of Brisnet.com: <http://www.brisnet.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/05/BelmontStakes18.pdf>.

FANS CAN WATCH JUSTIFY TRAIN IN PERSON OR ONLINE – With unbeaten Triple Crown hopeful **Justify** and four other possible Belmont Stakes contenders stabled on the grounds, Churchill Downs Racetrack is conducting a special 7:30-7:40 a.m. (all times Eastern) training period for those horses.

Area horse racing fans are invited to watch those colts train from the first floor of the facility free of charge. Churchill Downs Racetrack will open its Paddock Gate entrance between 7-8 a.m. each morning so the public can watch Kentucky Derby and Preakness winner Justify along with rivals **Bravazo**, **Free Drop Billy**, **Restoring Hope** and **Tenfold** prepare for the 1 ½-mile third jewel of horse racing's Triple Crown – the 150th running of the \$1.5 million Belmont Stakes (Grade I) on Saturday, June 9.

Guests may park free of charge in the Orange and Black Lots outside of the Paddock Gate.

Video of the exercises will be shown on the Big Board and infield video screens at Churchill Downs. Those unable to attend can watch an online live stream of the daily exercises with commentary on the Kentucky Derby Facebook (www.facebook.com/KentuckyDerby), Twitter (www.twitter.com/kentuckyderby) and at www.KentuckyDerby.com/Works from 7:20-7:45 a.m., thanks to **TwinSpires.com**, the country's leading online and mobile betting platform and official betting partner of Churchill Downs, the Kentucky Derby and Breeders' Cup World Championships. Also, clips of the activity will be uploaded on the Kentucky Derby YouTube channel.

BELMONT STAKES PROBABLE FREE DROP BILLY WORKS FIVE FURLONGS – Albaugh Family Stables' Breeders' Futurity (Grade I) winner **Free Drop Billy breezed five furlongs in :59.60 Monday morning at Churchill Downs as the colt prepares for a possible start in the June 9 Belmont Stakes (GI).**

During the exclusive training session from 7:30-7:40 a.m. EDT for horses preparing to start in the 1 ½-mile test, Free Drop Billy began his breeze at the half-mile pole with regular exercise rider **Juan Segundo** aboard through splits of :12.60, :23.80, :35.60 and :47 before galloping out six furlongs in 1:12, seven furlongs in 1:25.20 and completing one mile in 1:39.80, according to Churchill Downs' clocker **John Nichols**.

"Right now we're leaning towards running," trainer **Dale Romans** said. "We'll see how he comes out of the work Tuesday and talk with the owners. We'll make a final call in the next couple days."

Free Drop Billy, who finished 16th in the May 5 Kentucky Derby (GI), is by Union Rags out of the mare Trensa, who produced multiple Group I winner **Hawkbill**.

"(Hawkbill) won at 1 ½ miles, so I think Free Drop Billy could run all day," Romans said. "Horses in the Belmont will probably only run 1 ½ miles this one time so it's unique for everyone involved. Free Drop Billy certainly has the pedigree to run that distance."

DOWN THE STRETCH – Racing continues Memorial Day Monday at Churchill Downs with a massive \$656,990 carryover in the 20-cent Single 6 Jackpot that gets underway in Race 4 at 2:13 p.m. (all times Eastern) and a \$5,122 carryover in the \$1 Super Hi-5 in Race 9 at 4:55 p.m. First post of the nine-race program is 12:45 p.m. In celebration of Memorial Day, all active and retired members of the United States armed forces will be admitted free of charge. Also, Churchill Downs' bugler **Steve Buttleman** will perform patriotic melodies following the "Call to the Post" for each race. ... After dark days on Tuesday and Wednesday, racing at Churchill Downs will continue on Twilight Thursday with an eight-race program at 5 p.m. highlighted by \$1 beer, local food trucks and blues music by **Laurie Jane and the 45s**. ... Downs After Dark Presented by Budweiser returns Saturday and will feature the \$100,000 Aristides Stakes (GI) and \$70,000-added Mighty Beau Overnight Stakes. Guests are encouraged to dress in bright, neon colors for the theme "Neon Nights." Gates open at 5 p.m. with the first of 11 races scheduled at 6 p.m. To purchase tickets visit www.churchilldowns.com/tickets.

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